

Obituary

J.C. Daniel

(1927-2011)

Mr. Jivanayakam Cyril Daniel was born on July 9, 1927, in Nagerkdil in Tamil Nadu. Mr. Jivanayakam – his father – was a famous educationist of Keraia (Travancore at that time). Mr. Daniel, or JC as he was fondly called by his colleagues, joined BNHS in 1950 at a young age of 23 as Research Assistant in the Collection Department of the Society with an M.Sc. degree in Zoology. Save for a break of five years, from 1955 to 1960, when he worked as a curator at the Natural History Museum, Darjeeling, he devoted his entire life to the Society, first as Director (called Curator at that time) from 1960 till his retirement in 1991, and later in various capacities as Honorary Secretary and Vice President. After a brief illness, he expired on August 23, 2011, at the age of 84.

Mr. Daniel was a complete naturalist, interested in all aspects of natural history, but his forte was reptiles. His most famous book *THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES*, first published in 1983, was updated and reprinted twice as *THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS*, since 2002. He edited and revised six books, and contributed chapters/sections to a few more. He was one of the editors of the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* from 1965, and Executive Editor from 1989 till 2003. He conceived and designed *Hornbill*, the popular magazine of the Society in 1976 and remained its Editor till 2004. He guided seven M.Sc. and ten Ph.D. students in Field Ornithology, Mammalogy and Herpetology.

Since 1953, when his short note on the tadpole of *Rana leithii* Boul. was published in the *JBNHS* (51: 512-514), he published 25 papers in Herpetology, 8 papers in Mammalogy, 9 in Ornithology and 8 short notes, mainly in the *JBNHS*. Over a career of nearly 60 years the number of his research publications may not be impressive, but they had a great influence on the trend of vertebrate ecological studies in India. Mr. Daniel's contribution to the status surveys of species like Indian Wild Buffalo, Blackbuck, Tiger, Nilgiri Tahr, Saltwater Crocodile, Asian Elephant and Golden Gecko will be remembered for long, as these surveys generated baseline information for vital threatened species. His questionnaire survey on Tiger in 1968-69 resulted in an analysis of the status of this species and drew attention to the need for immediate conservation measures. These results were presented in the IUCN Assembly in 1969 and published in 1970 in *JBNHS* (67: 227-234), and greatly influenced the establishment of Project Tiger a few years later. His paper on the rediscovery of Golden Gecko *Calodactylodes aureus* in the Tirupathi Hills of Andhra Pradesh resulted in the establishment of a national park in the area. From 1980 to 1991, along with Dr. Sâlim Ali, he guided four major projects of the Society. These large projects funded by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service resulted in total transformation of research and conservation activities in BNHS, as a large number of field scientists were recruited, many working for their M.Sc. and Ph.D. degree under Mr. Daniel. Many of these scientists are now influencing the conservation movement of India.

Mr. Daniel was a recipient of many awards, starting with Sir Peter Scott Award for Conservation in 1988, Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Award in 1997, Sanctuary-Amro Bank, Millennium Lifetime Service to Conservation Award in 2000, and Distinguished Service Award from the Society for Conservation Biology in 2007. He was also a member of various government committees on wildlife and conservation.

Mr. Daniel's major achievements are not his research papers and awards, but his legion of students and colleagues that he was able to influence. For almost 50 years, he was the doyen among the naturalists of India with a vast knowledge of India's wildlife. Mr. Daniel's influence will be felt for many years after his demise, as many of his students are continuing the work that he started as a young apprentice in BNHS in 1950.

Asad R. Rahmani